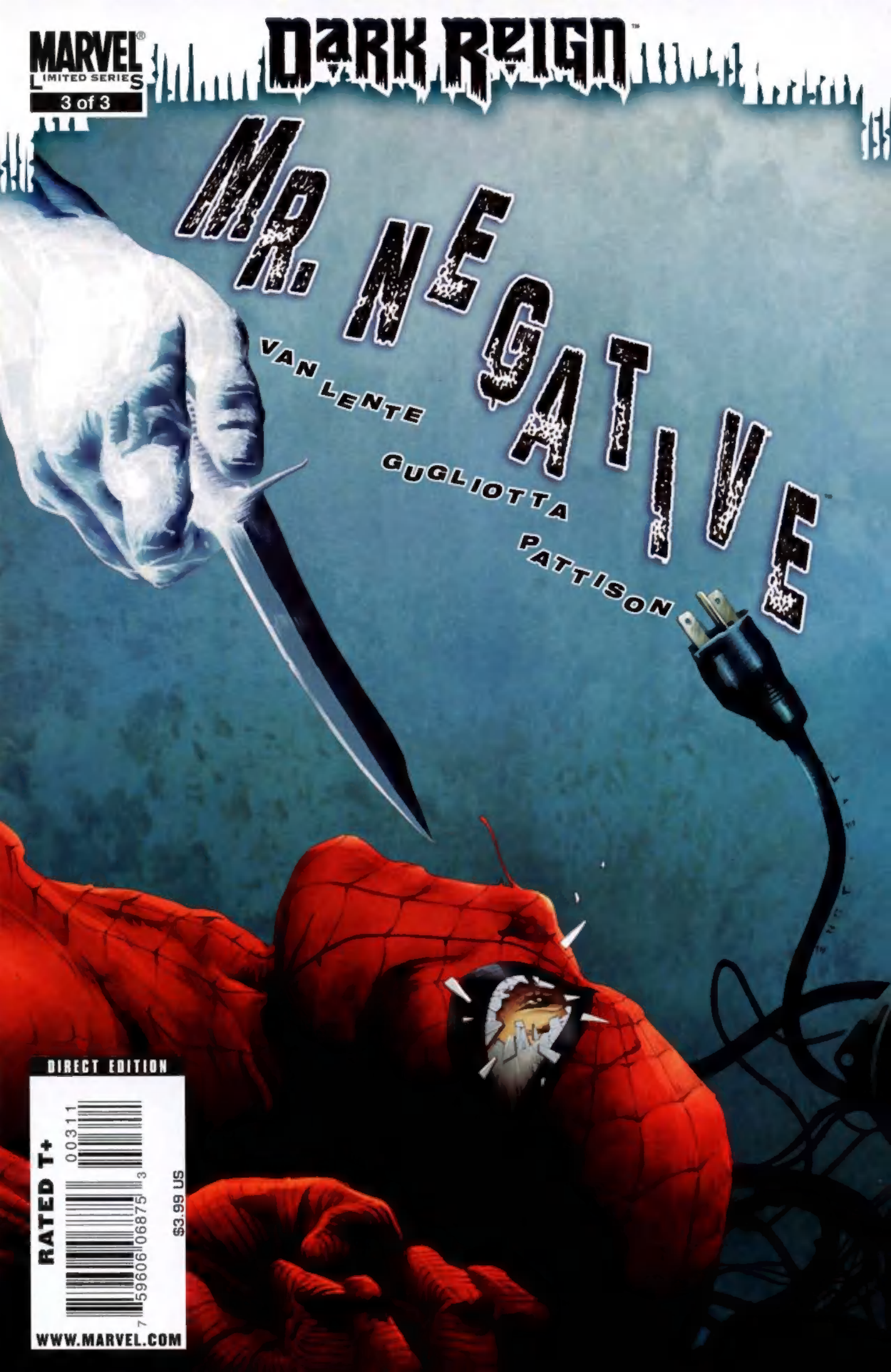
MARVEL
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3 of 3
DARK REIGN
MR. NEGATIVE
VAN LENTE
GUGLIOTTA
PATTISON
DIRECT EDITION
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NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT

PARKER ROBBINS, BETTER KNOWN AS THE HOOD, HAS SPENT THE PAST YEAR MARSHALLING THE SUPER VILLAIN UNDERWORLD INTO AN ARMY...HIS ARMY. HIS LATEST TARGET IN HIS QUEST TO CONTROL NEW YORK CITY IS CHINATOWN – MR. NEGATIVE'S TURF. BUT MR. NEGATIVE IS NO MINOR THREAT...

BUOYED BY THE FORTUNE HIS ALTER EGO, MARTIN LI, HAS ACCUMULATED, NEGATIVE HAS AN ARMY OF HIS OWN FOLLOWERS, INCLUDING THE REVAMPED HAMMERHEAD – AND A MYSTERIOUS CORRUPTING TOUCH THAT CAN BEND ANY OPPONENT TO HIS WILL, A TOUCH HE HAS ALREADY USED ON THE WHITE DRAGON, ONE OF THE HOOD'S TOP LIEUTENANTS – AND THE HEROIC SPIDER-MAN, A FREQUENT TORMENTOR OF THE HOOD'S FOLLOWERS. WITH THE COVERT ASSISTANCE OF NORMAN OSBORN'S H.A.M.M.E.R. FORCES, THE HOOD HAS CORNERED OFF CHINATOWN AND TAKEN THIS WAR TO THE STREETS. AS THE CORRUPTED SPIDER-MAN DISPATCHES THE HOOD'S GOONS, MR. NEGATIVE AND THE HOOD DO BATTLE IN NEGATIVE'S HEADQUARTERS.

MEANWHILE, BETTY BRANT, INTREPID REPORTER FOR THE DB, HAS BEEN SENT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NEGATIVE'S ALTER EGO, MARTIN LI. LI APPEARS TO BE A PERFECT SAINT – HIS ROBUST WEALTH DRIVES THE F.E.A.S.T. COMMUNITY OUTREACH CENTERS, AND HIS HEROIC STRUGGLE TO ESCAPE CHINA AND COME TO THE WEST IS LEGENDARY. BUT BRANT DISCOVERS, LI HAS A WIFE WHO LIVES IN ABJECT POVERTY – AND THAT SAME WIFE REVEALS THAT HER HUSBAND MAY NOT BE WHO HE SEEMS. AS BETTY CHASES AFTER MRS. LI, SHE'S CONFRONTED BY SPIDER-MAN – WHO HAS BEEN ORDERED TO KILL BETTY!

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TIME TO DIE, NEGATIVE!
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
My name is Betty Brant.
I tried my **best** to be a **reporter.**
SKRAKKTCH
PERHAPS, BUT NOT TODAY AND NOT TO THE LIKES OF YOU, HOOD.
But somehow I always knew I'd **die** this way.

TSK, TSK.
BETTY, BETTY, BETTY...
...YOU'RE ALREADY BORING ME.
YAHHH!!! NO!! NOOOO!!
My husband, Ned, was murdered in the Hobgoblin's costume, framed for his crimes.
AIIIYAH!!
ZWOK
NFF.
AIII..
EH?
HA!

My brother **Bennett** was killed in the crossfire of a battle between Spider-Man and **Dr. Octopus's** gang.
Only stands to reason **I'd** go thanks to a **costume,** too.
IN AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #11-- Way-Back Wacker
But I'm **not** my husband!
I'm **not** my brother!
I want to live!
I want to LIVE!
NFFF--
RRRGGG--
AAAHHH!!

SKRRANG
ALONE AT LAST, UGLY BETTY!
NOW WHAT SAY WE TWO HAVE US SOME FU--
MM.
BAM BAM BAM
HUHH!
GYAH!
SHWIING

SSKKSSSH
In my reporting, I'd heard rumors Mr. Negative can **corrupt** people with a **touch.** That must be what he's done here.
AAGGGH-- DAMN IT!
Turned the **darkness** lurking inside Spider-Man **outward.**
Well, **I** have darkness too.
HHHSSSS!!
THERE'S NO REASON FOR US TO FIGHT, MISTER HOOD.
IN FACT, I SUSPECT, FROM NOW ON...
...YOU'RE GOING TO SEE THINGS *MY* WAY.

UHHH!
MISS BRANT!
OVER HERE!
GIVE ME--NGGGG--ONE GOOD REASON TO TRUST YOU, MRS. LI!
YOU SICCED MR. NEGATIVE ON ME!
NO! I'M SORRY--I DIDN'T KNOW MR. NEGATIVE TRY AND KILL YOU!
I JUST WANT HIM TO KNOW--I NEVER BETRAY HIM! I OWE HIM MY LIFE!
WAIT--I HAVE TO REST FOR A SECOND--MY FOOT...
LOOK, YANA, PLEASE! YOU'RE NOT HELPING YOUR HUSBAND BY PROTECTING THIS GANGSTER!
IF THERE'S A CONNECTION BETWEEN MARTIN LI, AND HIS FORTUNE--OR HIS PHILANTHROPY--AND MR. NEGATIVE, IT'S BEST IF YOU TELL ME WHAT IT IS--
I AM! YOU DON'T LISTEN!
MARTIN TELL ME HE COME OVER FROM FUJIAN TO JOIN ME HERE IN AMERICA--BUT HE MISS THE DATE BY WEEKS!
I... MOURN FOR HIM. I THINK HE DROWN ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHER CHINESE ON THAT AWFUL SHIP, GOLDEN MOUNTAIN.
BUT THE SNAKEHEAD GANG--THE DRAGON LORDS--THEY DON'T CARE MARTIN IS DEAD.
THEY SAY, "WE DELIVER HIS CORPSE TO AMERICA. HIS WIFE PAY WHAT HE OWE US!"
THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. I AM A BOOKKEEPER. I DON'T HAVE THIS KIND OF MONEY.
SO THE DRAGON LORDS... THEY DECIDE TO MAKE EXAMPLE OF ME.

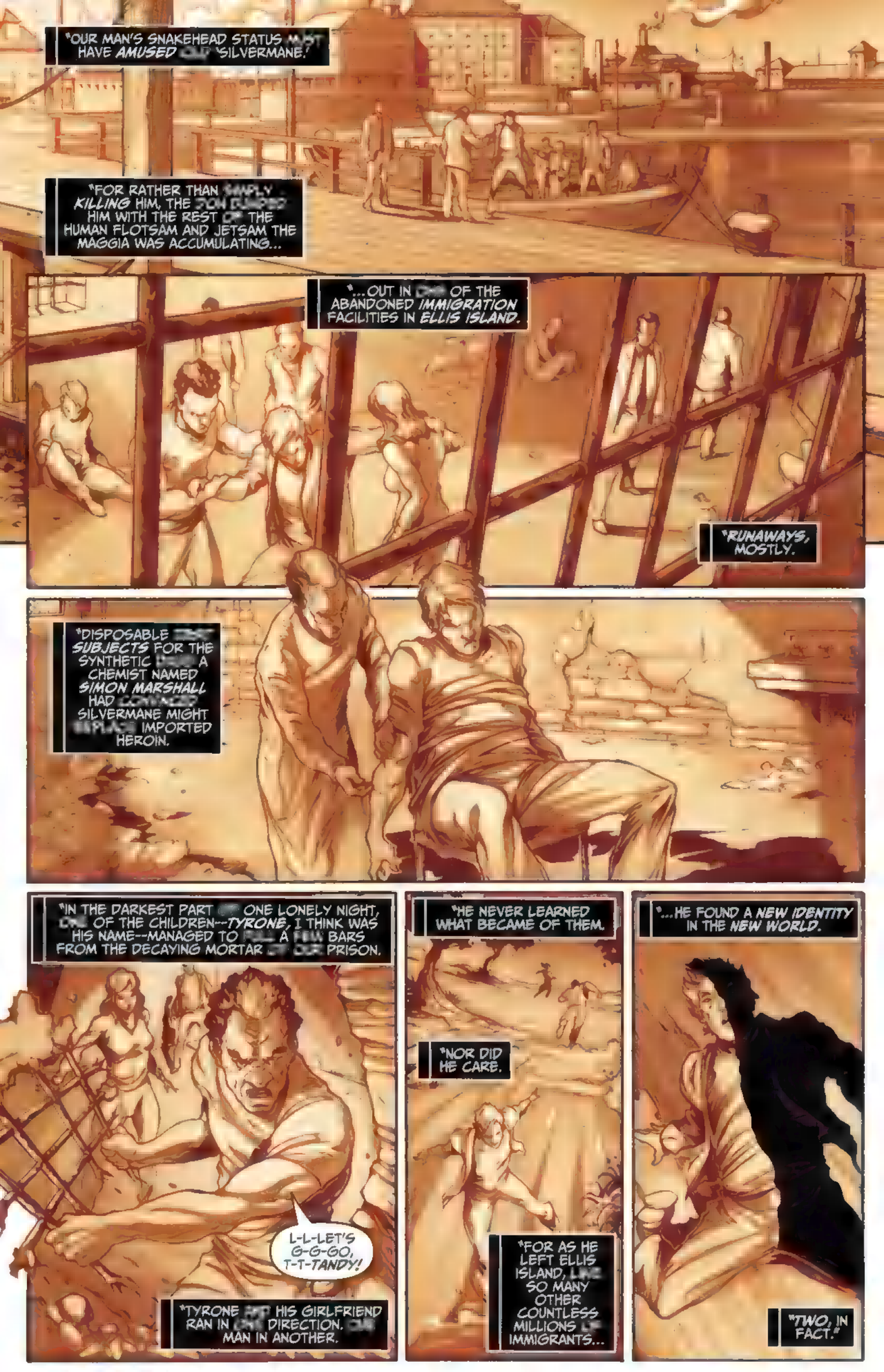
"THEY TAKE ME TO THIS HOUSE IN BROOKLYN, IN SUNSET PARK, WHERE THEY KEEP CHINESE WHO CAN'T MAKE THEIR DEBTS.
"THEY RENT THEM LIKE SLAVES TO LOCAL BUSINESSES, THEN POCKET THEIR WAGES...
RESTAURANT
"...OR THEY HOLD THEM FOR RANSOM 'TIL FAMILY BACK HOME PAY.
"OR, IN MY CASE, THEY...
"...THEY...
"HE CAME WHILE I WAS STILL ALIVE, AND CONSCIOUS.

"I HEARD LATER HE WAS JUST TAKING OVER THE WHITE DRAGON'S CHINATOWN GANG.
"HE WAS ALL ALONE THEN. NO HENCHMEN, NO 'INNER DEMONS.'
"HE ASKED WHO I WAS, HOW MUCH I OWED THE WHITE DRAGON, AND FOR WHO.
"I TOLD HIM THE STORY OF GOLDEN MOUNTAIN...
"...AND I WAS THE WIFE OF MARTIN LI.
"I BEGGED HIM NOT TO LEAVE ME THERE.
"BUT IN HIS EYES--THERE WAS NOTHING. IT WAS LIKE TALKING TO A WILD ANIMAL.
"I THOUGHT HE KILL ME JUST FOR BEING THERE.
"BUT THEN... FOR ONLY A SECOND... I THOUGHT I SAW..."
"WHAT, MRS. LI?"

"NOTHING.
"I'M SURE IT WAS NOTHING."
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHY HE SAVED YOU?
NO! THEN-- YEARS LATER--I HEAR A CHINESE--THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN SURVIVOR--
--IS GETTING A MEDAL FROM THE U.S. PRESIDENT!
THEY SAY HIS NAME IS "MARTIN LI!" I GET NEWSPAPER, I LOOK AT PHOTO--
BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE IN MY LIFE!
WAIT.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
THIS "MARTIN LI" YOU KEEP ASKING ME ABOUT... I DON'T KNOW HOW HE KNOWS SO MUCH ABOUT GOLDEN MOUNTAIN...
...BUT HE'S NOT MY HUSBAND! I DON'T KNOW WHO [redacted] IS!
I..
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
HOW ABOUT...
... "I AM SO DEAD"?
YYYAAAAAAAAA!!

WHAT--
THAT LIGHT SHOW SUPPOSED TO IMPRESS ME?
AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD'S WAS WAY BETTER.
MY CORRUPTING TOUCH... HAS NEVER FAILED ME
FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING.
I SENSE... YOU HAVE YOURSELF WHOLLY OVER DARKER THAN I.
THERE'S... LIGHT IN TO CORRUPT. YOU'VE IT!
AND I WILL CRY MYSELF TO SLEEP TONIGHT ABOUT THAT, I PROMISE.
HAHAHAHAHA
YOU POOR, PATHETIC, MAN...
I USED BE LIKE ALL ONE OR THE OTHER.
OR RATHER... WHAT I WAS BEFORE I WAS ME... WAS
ENOUGH OF YOUR FORTUNE COOKIE B.S.
HASN'T DONE YOU ANY GOOD.
NO?

"ONCE THERE WAS A SNAKEHEAD, A SMUGGLER OF HUMANS...
"...PANICKED IN A SUMMER STORM AND FORCED THE CAPTAIN OF A SHIP NAMED GOLDEN MOUNTAIN INTO SHALLOW WATER AT GUNPOINT.
"THE SHIP RAN AGROUND, ENSURING THE U.S. COAST GUARD WOULD INVESTIGATE AS SOON AS THE WEATHER CLEARED.
"OUR MAN PANICS WITH MORE, NOW. HE HAS A CRIMINAL RECORD IN THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA, YOU SEE. THE LAST THING HE WANTS IS TO BE DEPORTED.
"BUT HE REMEMBERS...A FEW OF HIS 'PIGLETS' DIED OF PNEUMONIA DURING THE JOURNEY! AHA! PERFECT!
"UNLIKE HIS ILLEGALS, OUR SNAKEHEAD DOES NOT SUFFER FROM STARVATION OR THE DAILY BEATINGS HE METED OUT.
"SO HE STEALS THE IDENTITY PAPERS OFF ONE OF THE CORPSES...SOME ZIPPER FACTORY OWNER FROM FUZHOU CITY.
HE'S ABLE TO SWIM SAFELY TO NEW YORK HARBOR BEFORE THE CREW SINKS THE SHIP.
"HE SEEKS OUT HIS FELLOW SMUGGLERS AT THEIR HIDEOUT IN FLUSHING.
"AND HE LEARNS WHY THEY DID NOT ANSWER THEIR SHORTWAVE RADIO WHEN HE HAILED THEM FROM THE SHIP.
"SILVIO MANFREDI, DON OF THE MAGGIA, IS CONSOLIDATING CONTROL OVER THIS PART OF QUEENS."


*OUR MAN'S SNAKEHEAD STATUS MUST HAVE AMUSED [illegible] SILVERMANE.
*FOR RATHER THAN SIMPLY KILLING HIM, THE [illegible] DUMPED HIM WITH THE REST OF THE HUMAN FLOTSAM AND JETSAM THE MAGGIA WAS ACCUMULATING...
*...OUT IN [illegible] OF THE ABANDONED IMMIGRATION FACILITIES IN ELLIS ISLAND.
*RUNAWAYS, MOSTLY.
*DISPOSABLE [illegible] SUBJECTS FOR THE SYNTHETIC [illegible] A CHEMIST NAMED SIMON MARSHALL HAD [illegible] SILVERMANE MIGHT [illegible] IMPORTED HEROIN.
*IN THE DARKEST PART [illegible] ONE LONELY NIGHT, [illegible] OF THE CHILDREN---TYRONE, I THINK WAS HIS NAME--MANAGED TO [illegible] A [illegible] BARS FROM THE DECAYING MORTAR [illegible] PRISON.
L-L-LET'S G-G-GO, T-T-TANDY!
*TYRONE [illegible] HIS GIRLFRIEND RAN IN [illegible] DIRECTION. [illegible] MAN IN ANOTHER.
*HE NEVER LEARNED WHAT BECAME OF THEM.
*NOR DID HE CARE.
*FOR AS HE LEFT ELLIS ISLAND, [illegible] SO MANY OTHER COUNTLESS MILLIONS [illegible] IMMIGRANTS...
*...HE FOUND A NEW IDENTITY IN THE NEW WORLD.
*TWO, IN FACT.

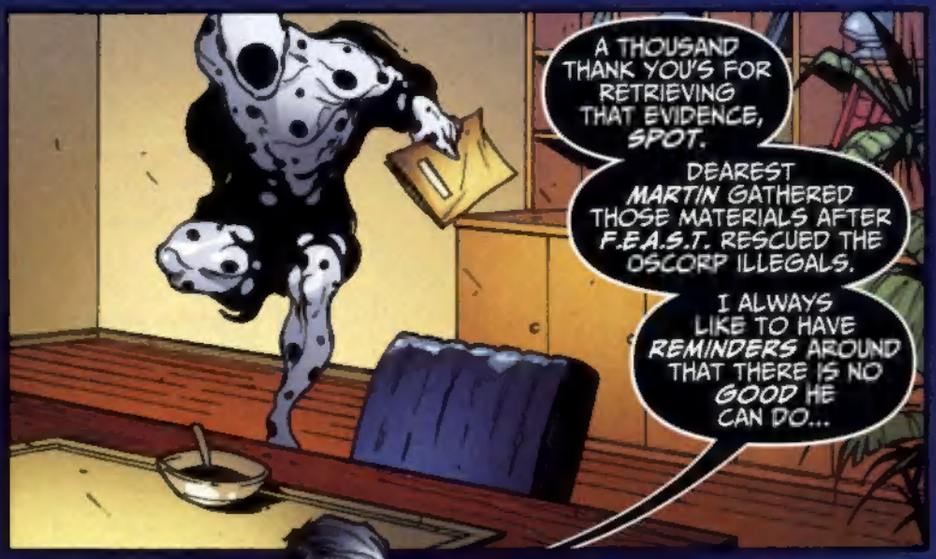
STOP! STOP! LET HER GO--
ALL THOSE YEARS... YOU WERE THAT LYING SCUMBAG JAMESON'S SECRETARY...
TYPING ALL THOSE EDITORIALS ATTACKING ME DEMANDING THE COPS HOUND ME...
AND YOU DID NOTHING TO STOP HIM! NOTHING!
GGGGKKKK--
MASTER WANTS YOU ALIVE FOR SOME REASON, BUT I DON'T SEE HIM HERE, DO YOU?
I KNOW... I KNOW
I SHOULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING
I BLAMED YOU FOR BENNETT AND NED BUT NOW I SEE I UNDERSTAND
YOU'RE AS MUCH A VICTIM AS THOSE OF US WITHOUT MASKS... GGGKKKK
SHUT UP! SHUT UP!!! I WILL TAKE YOUR PITY AND SHOVE IT DOWN YOUR--
THAT VOICE
CHOKE IT OFF!
SOOTHING, SMILING
SMASH IT IN!
HER PERFUME, THAT DAY
THERE WAS A TIME
I NEVER WANTED NOT TO BE BESIDE YOU

THE MOMENT
STILL GLOWS INSIDE ME
KK~~
AND YOU WILL NOT
DIM ITS LIGHT
NO!!
NGGGK
GGYYAA
RRAAAAHHH!!

I'M THE SHEAT PRE-HE-TEND-ER ♫...WHOO-OO-WHOO-OO...A♫
AHHHHHH...
I GAVE THAT RINGTONE TO...
WHAT?!
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING!
CALL IT OFF.
COME AGAIN? WHAT ARE YOU SMOKING? I GOT NEGATIVE RIGHT WHERE I WANT HIM--
SPILT MILK, MY BOY.
I'VE ALREADY SENT THE H.A.M.M.E.R. CORDON AROUND CHINATOWN HOME.
I SUGGEST YOU MAKE YOURSELF SCARCE BEFORE YOU'RE REPORTED AND MY AVENGERS ARE FORCED TO SUBDUE YOU.
THIS IS OUTSIDE OUR ARRANGEMENT! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO INTERFERE IN MY BUSINESS--
I HAVE MADE MY OWN ARRANGEMENT WITH MR. NEGATIVE. HIS ACTIVITIES ARE NOW UNDER MY PROTECTION...
...JUST AS YOURS ARE.
THE DETAILS NEED NOT CONCERN YOU.
KLIK
ARRGGHHH!! ¤¤¤¤¤ THIS! ¤¤¤¤¤ HIM!
KILL NEGATIVE ANYWAY!!!
UH... SLIGHT PROBLEM WITH THAT, BOSS...
WHAT? WHY...?
OH, I DON'T BELIEVE THIS.

"WHERE'D HE GO?"
THE FOLLOWING NIGHT.
BELIEVE ME, NOTHING WOULD GIVE ME GREATER SATISFACTION THAN NEGATIVE'S RICHLY DESERVED COMEUPPANCE.
BUT THIS WAS THE RIGHT MOVE. THE "BIG PICTURE" MOVE.
IN RETURN FOR MY INTERCESSION, NEGATIVE TURNED OVER EVIDENCE OSCORP HAD BEEN EXPERIMENTING ON CHINESE ILLEGALS...
...WITH BIOCHEMICALS PRODUCED BY OUR CAPTURED "FREAK."*
LORD ONLY KNOWS HOW HE GOT THESE...
*SEE ASM "NEW WAYS TO DIE" -Old Way To Steve
MY ENEMIES WOULD LOVE TO SEE THESE FILES RELEASED TO THE PRESS.
BUT NOW THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.
BESIDES, HOOD HAD BEEN FEELING HIS OATS RATHER KEENLY OF LATE. TESTING BOUNDARIES, AS ANY PROBLEM CHILD WOULD...
HE WAS OVERDUE A REMINDER THAT IN OUR LITTLE "CABAL" I AM THE FIRST AMONG EQUALS—
WHAT'S THAT?
NOW THAT NEGATIVE HAS BEEN LULLED INTO COMPLACENCY, WAIT A FEW MONTHS... THEN CRUSH HIM UTTERLY?
YES... OF COURSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU'RE ALWAYS RIGHT.

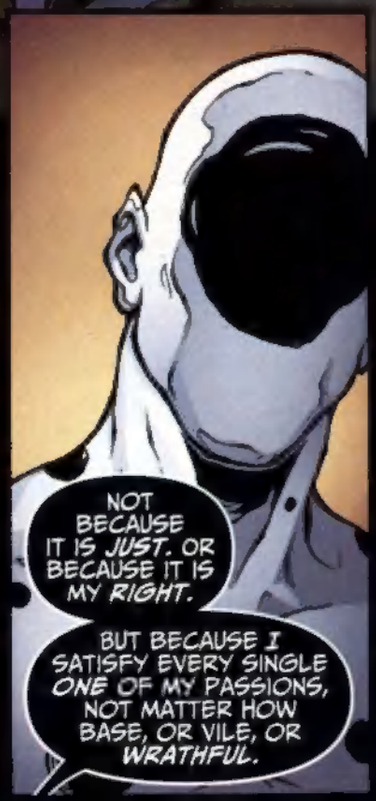
LI'L MARTIN


A THOUSAND THANK YOU'S FOR RETRIEVING THAT EVIDENCE, SPOT.
DEAREST MARTIN GATHERED THOSE MATERIALS AFTER F.E.A.S.T. RESCUED THE OSCORP ILLEGALS.
I ALWAYS LIKE TO HAVE REMINDERS AROUND THAT THERE IS NO GOOD HE CAN DO...

...THAT I CANNOT CORRUPT.
BUT THIS IS THE LEAST OF THE SERVICES YOU HAVE RENDERED ME.
WITHOUT YOUR TIMELY WARNING, I NEVER COULD HAVE ORGANIZED A COUNTER-STRATEGY TO THE HOOD'S ATTACK AS QUICKLY AS I DID.

"NOR SLIPPED UNSEEN FROM THE CLUTCHES OF MY ENEMIES.
"I AM QUITE CERTAIN HOOD WILL NEVER SUSPECT YOU JOINED HIS ORGANIZATION ON MY BEHALF."

NO ONE KNOWS HOW MUCH WE HAVE IN COMMON... AS BOTH OUR POWERS DERIVE FROM THE ENIGMATIC DARKFORCE.
I SWEAR AGAIN MY PLEDGE TO FIND A CURE FOR YOUR BIZARRE CONDITION...
...AS SOON AS YOU FINISH HELPING ME UTTERLY DESTROY THE MAGGIA FOR WHAT THEY DID TO ME.


NOT BECAUSE IT IS JUST. OR BECAUSE IT IS MY RIGHT.
BUT BECAUSE I SATISFY EVERY SINGLE ONE OF MY PASSIONS, NOT MATTER HOW BASE, OR VILE, OR WRATHFUL.

I PROPOSE A TOAST.
TO EVIL.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER...
...AND NOT ONLY WILL OUR CONSTRUCTION CREWS FINISH REPAIRING THE DAMAGE DONE TO CHINATOWN BY AUTUMN...
...F.E.A.S.T. WILL TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY OF THIS EXPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE TO LAY IN HIGH SPEED INTERNET LINES AT NO COST TO THE CITY!
THAT'S SIMPLY... AMAZING, MR. LI.
WELL. I'M GLAD TO HEAR YOU THINK SO, MS. BRANT.
I GOT THE IMPRESSION YOUR BOSS, MR. BENNETT, DOES NOT LIKE ME VERY MUCH.
YOU'LL GET NO ARGUMENT HERE.
I TRIED DOING THIS STORY DEXTER BENNETT'S WAY. IT LED ME ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE DOWN A BLIND ALLEY.
THIS IS A MORE... BALANCED PIECE.
I'M THINKING OF SELLING IT TO FRONTLINE INSTEAD.
BALANCED. AN EXCELLENT PHILOSOPHY.
THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY, ARE THERE NOT?
THERE ARE. AND I'M GOING TO TELL BOTH OF THEM.
THAT'S MY JOB, AFTER ALL.
I'M A REPORTER.
GEEZ... ALL THIS DEVASTATION...
I HAVE TO ASK YOU, MR. LI...
HOW CAN YOU NOT HATE THE HOOD, MR. NEGATIVE, AND ALL THE OTHER CROOKS WHO DID THIS TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?
HATE THEM?
WHY... HOW COULD I HATE THEM, MS. BRANT?
AFTER ALL, WITHOUT EVIL MEN...

...I WOULD NEVER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO MUCH GOOD.
the end.